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THE CHALLENGE OF THE MINISTRY



BY

AHVA JOHN CLARENCE BOND

AUTHOR OF

"RECONSTRUCTION MESSAGES"

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To the Memory of
My MOTHER

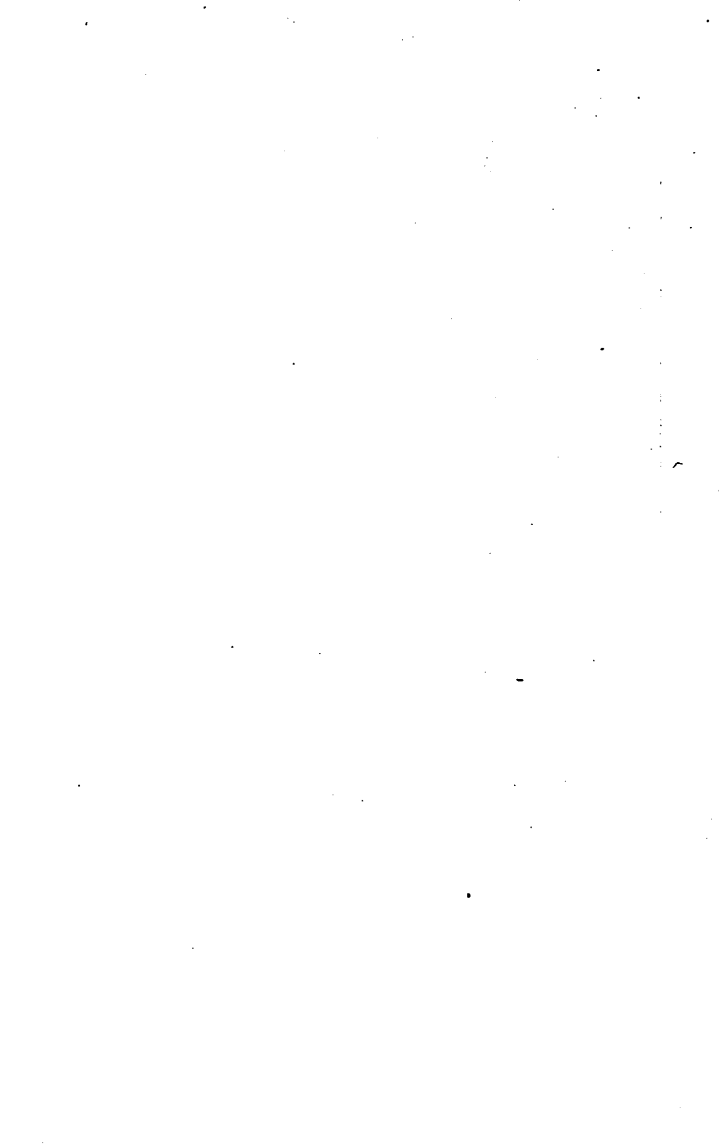
ELIZABETH SCHIEFER BOND

Who early set my feet in the path that led me
into the Christian Ministry

**PRESS OF THE
SUN PUBLISHING ASSOCIATION
ALFRED, N. Y.**

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INTRODUCTION

In the spring of 1919, Rev. A. J. C. Bond, pastor at Salem, West Virginia, gave a course of six sermons and addresses at Alfred and Alfred Station, N. Y., on the vital subject, *The Challenge of the Ministry*. Four more were prepared later in order to make the treatment of the subject still more complete. That we, as well as other denominations, are in great need of more ministers of the gospel well prepared for their high calling, and of well trained teachers of religion, is very certain.

There are many fields of great usefulness open to young men and women who are fitted in body, mind and heart, to take up the tasks, on both home and foreign fields. There are many beckoning opportunities for social, educational and distinctly religious service.

In view of such facts as these, Alfred Theological Seminary, with the help of the Board of Trustees of the Seventh Day Baptist Memorial Fund, and of others, has arranged to publish the instructive, appealing and challenging sermons and addresses of Mr. Bond, in book form. It is hoped that this will prove to be a welcomed and practical part of our great Forward Movement.

ARTHUR E. MAIN.

THE DIVINE CALL

Text:—"Come ye after me, and I will make you fishers of men." Matt. 4: 19b.

I see before me serious minded Christian young people, looking out upon life, undetermined as to what shall be your life work. Leading out from where you stand are many paths going in many directions, all inviting and holding out to you the promise of success. Hesitant and undecided you stand, waiting some finger-pointing to direct you into the way that you ought to take. You are not deterred by a fear of the future, for although you are undecided as to which one of the many paths of service open to you is your path, yet you do know in whom you have believed, and are persuaded that he is able to keep that which you have committed unto him against that day. Neither are you tempted to turn aside into the bypath of pleasure, nor to be lured away by the siren song of ease. The path you seek is a path of service. But of these there are many. Which shall you take?

I am glad to recognize the divine call to a business career, or to the profession of teaching, or of medicine, or to any other vocation of

life where service can be rendered to humanity, and the work of the Kingdom promoted. I rejoice in the many avenues of service distinctly religious which our young people may enter,—more today than ever before in the history of the world. But I wish to devote this series of addresses to the specific task of presenting the distinct claims of the Christian ministry.

It is a calling which has a worthy history in the lives and deeds of those who have made it a holy calling. First in its ranks are numbered the disciples of Jesus who received by personal contact with the Master their inspiration and their instruction, and who set out to convert the world by the foolishness of preaching. In harmony with their commission they began at Jerusalem, with the purpose of spreading out through Judea and Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the world. Philip followed, preaching the Word, and the consecrated deacon became the soul-winning evangelist. Paul got a vision of the conquering Christ and proclaimed the good news of salvation among the Gentiles, even at the capital of the world. Time would fail me to speak of all who readily come to mind. Chrisostum, Augustine, Savonarola, Francis of Assisi, Peter the Hermit, John Wycliffe, John Huss, Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Knox, The Stennetts, The Wesleys, Whitefield, Bushnell, and Beecher and Brooks. These preachers of the Gospel, with many others who were just as faithful

if less conspicuous in their service, have had more to do with the progress of the race than have emperors and popes, or kings of finance.

But we are confronted with the persistent, and sometimes impertinent suggestion that the minister is not held in as high regard today as in times past, and that he is not the man of influence that he used to be. It is a fact, which I have no desire to blink, that men of today show no special regard for the cloth. It takes more than a long-tailed coat, a serious countenance, and sanctimonious contortions to appeal to hard headed men of this scientific and desperately efficient age. But this fact itself appeals to young men of red blood and Christian integrity. The premium has been removed from the externals and the accidentals behind which men of mediocre minds and unworthy motives may hide, and has been placed upon fitness. The ministry calls today for young men of consecration, but for young men who have talents and faculties to consecrate. It calls for men of holy purposes, but for men with powers trained to serve those higher purposes. Every occupation today contributes its share to the human scrapheap of the down-and-outs who have failed in the acid test of experience. I want to say here, not as a deterrent but as a challenge, that no calling requires greater ability, more careful preparation, or a more constant recognition of its high demands, than the Gospel ministry.

Our conception of the call to the ministry has been perverted by honest but deluded men who believe they have had the experience. Booker T. Washington tells us that as a young man he lived in mortal dread of a "call." He was familiar with the experience as he had observed its workings upon older men of his race. They were suddenly and violently smitten down, and with groanings easily and amply uttered they gave evidence of the agony of the "call." Ever since Constantine had his vision of a cross in the sky, men, self-deceived or deceiving, have imposed upon the world an unworthy conception of this sacred experience. Tinctured and tainted as our minds have been by such unnatural representations, we have read into the call of prophets and apostles of old a magic which they did not possess. I would not for one moment seem to remove the trace of the divine hand in leading men to become prophets of God. The Divine is there in every genuine call, a conscious and blessed presence. But if I am not mistaken, a careful study of the call of holy men of old will reveal the fact that God takes account of those faculties with which he has already endowed men—feeling of course, but also reason and will. These are faculties that will be needed in the pursuit of the calling, and it is fair to assume that they will not be ignored or violated in this initial experience. We have thought of the prophets of God as men living apart from the world, suspended somehow between heaven

and earth, too good to tread our common soil. The fact is these men lived not only in active relation to the most stirring events of their times, but they lived in the most eventful periods of Israel's history. In every instance it was a political crisis that gave them birth. In this significant fact we have a suggestion as to the nature of a call to the ministry; an indication both as to its occasion and its character. It is a passion and purpose to lead in a spiritual service where the need is greatest.

The first requisite for the ministry is a clean life. I would not say that he who has gone low in sin and has drunk of its bitterness may not be used of God to warn men against the pitfalls from which he has been rescued. I appreciate the enthusiasm with which many, thus delivered, proclaim the way of salvation and point out the dangers along life's road. More precision to their finger and more power to their voice! But the great prophets of God both in ancient and in modern times have not come from that class. They have been men whose early years were pre-empted by the Holy Spirit, and whose natural powers have been brought to the altar of God not only unimpaired by dissipation, but developed and trained. Witness a Moses, a Samuel and an Amos. The list could be extended to include the great majority of prophets and preachers who have profoundly stirred men and rendered permanent service to the world. Natural ability, strength

of character, and inner integrity should be included in the offering of every young man who would devote his life to the Gospel ministry. No one will be able to bring a perfect life, but honesty with God, with men, and with oneself is a prime prerequisite. His development should be like that of the Master himself, who increased in stature, in wisdom, and in favor with God and man.

The church must look for its ministers for the immediate future among its own young men and boys of today. Whatever weakness or failure there may be in the church, it is from the number of those who regularly attend her public services, and who believe in her life and mission, that the ranks of the ministry must be filled.

It was in the temple that the young man Isaiah got his vision of the glory of God which filled the whole earth, and responded to the call whose urgency he felt, "Here am I, send me." It was in the temple that the adolescent Samuel heard a similar call, and answered the divine voice, "Speak, for thy servant heareth." It was in the temple that the boy Jesus felt the pulling impulse of his own unparalleled mission, which brought the response to his mother's question: "Know ye not that I must be about my Father's business?"

Jesus who as the Son of God came to reveal the Father, as the Son of Man became the perfect representative of the race, and should be reverently studied in this connection. Following his baptism and just before entering upon his public ministry Jesus was permitted a vision of all the nations of the earth and the glory of them. The little country of Palestine gave an opportunity for such a vision not found anywhere else in all the world at that time, although modern learning has made it possible anywhere today: Crowded up against the shores of the Mediterranean by the desert, Palestine formed a bridge between two continents, Asia and Africa; the connecting link between two primeval homes of the race; the valley of the Euphrates and of the Nile; and between two ancient civilizations, Assyria and Egypt. It was the highroad of commerce and the military road of conquest. The home of Jesus was in the more backward province of Galilee, but by climbing the hill back of his village home he could see the great caravans passing. And he made frequent visits to the more cosmopolitan city of Jerusalem. The social conditions of his time, the political situation, and the very geography itself, contributed to the preparation of Jesus for his public ministry. In the silence of the desert, but not without the presence of the tempter, he worked out his program for the Kingdom. It was not to be by the glory of a military conquest, or by material power, that the world

must be won, but by the preaching of the word in the power of the Spirit. He gathered about him a few choice souls, called from the common labors of life, gave them his message, and sent them out to preach. The Kingdom has not yet come in its fullness, and the Word must still be preached.

Never were the opportunities of the ministry greater than they are today. The young man who fails to give this question consideration thereby shows his inability to comprehend the power and possibilities of the only organization benevolent in its purposes, and at the same time world-wide in its aim. Other organizations are time servers, or they serve only for time. They may be of great benefit to society, just as many things that are temporary are nevertheless essential. But the one organization which comprehends the whole human race in its efforts to uplift and save and bless is the Church of Jesus Christ. The supreme opportunity which the church offers to young men of parts today, I say it advisedly, is her need of ministers. We live in a fast and changing age; in a world enlarged but unified by the scientific and historical method of study and investigation applied to every field of knowledge and endeavor. Nothing has escaped the analyzing scrutiny of the independent thinkers who are not willing to accept the label of a past age in determining a thing's value for our generation. We have worked

ourselves through the most distressing period in the process of religious reconstruction. Much rubbish had to be cleared away. The materials are now in our hands for constructive work. Never was the need greater for wise leaders, nor the future of the church more promising if these leaders can be found. In speaking of the results of modern Christian scholarship in rediscovering our Holy Bible, and in discussing the relation of the more intelligent to the traditional viewpoint, a pastor once made this statement to me: "I can see better pasture on the other side of the river, but I dare not undertake to lead my flock across for fear they drown in the stream." A graphic way of presenting a pathetic situation. Here is the tragedy of the dilemma; not only the shepherd of the sheep but members of his flock see this better pasture, and unless safely led they will attempt to cross alone, and floundering in water too deep for them, many will perish. It is not a question of holding them on this side to nibble the dry grass of tradition, or taking them across for a little better pasture. In many cases it is a question of life or death. The church needs for its mighty modern task the strength which will come as a result of the better pasturage.

We need ministers of scholarship. The call is for young men of college training, and with the student attitude and vision. The need is for a man who can comprehend the signifi-

cance of the great movements of his day, and who can relate himself and the church to them in a strong and helpful way. We need men who can face the withering blight of criticism; who can overcome the deadening influence of conservatism; who can check the threatening menace of radicalism; who can counteract the fatal power of materialism; who can withstand the chilling blasts of rationalism; who can face and fight any ism-devil, or devil of whatever kind, that dares to lift its horny head against the progress of the spiritual kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. The church must be inspired and organized to meet the impact of worldliness and to wage an aggressive campaign for righteousness. Men must be saved. The world must be won. Jesus is passing by, and he calls to young men today as he did to those young men in that far-off day by Galilee.

“Come ye after me, and I will make you fishers of men.”

THE PRESENT CRISIS

Text,—“Then I said, Here am I; send me.”
—Isaiah 6: 8b.

You may feel that the expression, “The present crisis,” has been so overworked of late as to have become a commonplace and hackneyed phrase, shorn of its power to jog the mind or grip the interest. It suits our purpose, however, and although well worn, it may be made to pass muster by a little brightening up. In the first place, let us remember that “crisis” is not the same as “peril.” We have too often held it to be so, and the result has been that the suggestion of a crisis brings visions of impending disaster and certain doom. Such fears enter into the question; for a crisis means a turning point, and at every turning point on the road of life, no doubt the dangers ahead are more imminent and perilous. But it brings also immediate and enlarged opportunities to make a better future. A peril passed is but an escape, a crisis may put us on the road to greater achievement, and even set us forward much faster than we could have gone without it. Someone has said that every generation believes itself to be passing through a crisis. Doubtless every generation that makes any good degree of progress so believes; and there

is a sense in which this is true. Always there are present in society elements which unwisely or carelessly handled, bring defeat. And just as truly every generation has at hand the materials with which to construct the Kingdom of God in the earth. But there are times when the elements of life are freer than at other times, and its materials more easily organized; when the removal of those things which are shaken takes place, in order that those things which are not shaken may remain.

Who can say that the present generation is not passing through such a crisis? Has the world ever witnessed such a time of revolution, dissolution, and readjustments, economic, political, and social? What is to be the constructive force that will bring together the enduring elements from this broken heap of human hopes and aspirations, and fuse them into a homogeneous whole, even the brotherhood of man. There is but one power that can do it, and it is not of this earth. Society must be reconstructed upon a religious basis: its materials sorted out if you please by the Holy Spirit, and transfused with the breath of God. And this divine service so sorely needed can be mediated only through men who like Isaiah have seen the Lord.

No doubt Isaiah had but recently come from the palace where he had looked upon the form of the dead king, and his spirit was de-

pressed. As he reflected upon the departed glory of the ruler of Israel, and thought of the difficult times ahead for the kingdom, his mind was filled with forebodings and his body shaken with fear. From the palace now no longer tenanted, he went to the temple. Isaiah had often entered the temple, where he was a regular and frequent worshiper, but never before in the same mood as now, and never perhaps so earnestly seeking divine counsel. Before him stood the altar of burning incense from which arose the fragrant smoke, symbolic of prayer and penitence; and a little farther on was the ark of the covenant over which stood the seraphim, suggestive of divine benevolence and mercy. All these things were familiar to Isaiah, for they had filled an important place in his worship. But today his thoughts ran deeper and his soul mounted higher, and he saw the Lord. The whole earth was full of his glory. And from that time as never before, Isaiah reckoned God in the affairs of mankind, and particularly in his own life, and he became the messenger of the divine evangel which alone could save his country. While he had no flattering promise that the people would receive his message, he could not have failed to measure correctly the great need of his sinful generation, and he had confidence in Him who had sent him. Hence this mighty prophet set forward the race by his clearcut sermons, and made mankind his debtor.

The present world situation presents the same problems as those that confronted Judea in Isaiah's day. They are magnified a thousand times, but they are the very same when applied to each separate community, and to the question of personal responsibility. Our times demand prophets, therefore. The church needs Christian statesmen. I throw out the challenge to the young men of our churches, and from Seventh Day Baptist homes. The conditions that surround you, the opportunities that are before you; the call for strong men in our pulpits and on our mission fields, demand that every young man with heart and mind and purpose shall consider at this time the work of the ministry. I am not saying that every worthy young man shall enter the ministry. The opportunities for service are legion, and they are everywhere. But the need of ministers is so great, and the opportunities there are so rich and give such promise of abundant fruitage, that every thoughtful youth must listen for the divine voice, lest the call of God go unheeded, and the work of the church languish for the lack of worthy and capable ministers.

In order, if possible, to help the young men themselves, and, what is quite as important, to help others, to an appreciation of the character of the divine call, let us seek to discover some of its elements, basing our analysis upon the experience of Isaiah. The obvious ele-

ments in Isaiah's vision, which are the fundamental elements also, are three. He had a vision of God, a vision of need, and a vision of opportunity.

The man who would preach the gospel of salvation to a lost world today and lead the church to victory, must have a vision of God; of God, high and lifted up, but whose glory fills the earth. To think of God as seated away off somewhere, utterly detached from our earth, is deism, which is always cold and blighting. Many members of our evangelical churches who subscribe to an orthodox creed, nevertheless live as though God were afar off and unrelated to our daily life. On the other hand some have rebounded to the other extreme, and have accepted a sort of pantheistic faith, most assiduously expounded by the followers of Mrs. Eddy, which exalts man, denies the existence of sin, and destroys Christ as the mediator of life. The minister who would meet successfully every crisis of mankind, and of every individual man as well, must come to God through Christ in order that he may get his vision of God from the viewpoint of the Master. God the Father of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, is exalted and holy, but compassionate and tender. And these are not separate attributes which can be pigeonholed, and brought out on occasion. God is not at one time judge and at another advocate, but always Our Father, holy and good. In his

presence sin cannot abide. No more can the penitent sinner be separated from him. Apart from God there is nothing worth while; with him there is fullness of life and power. May he grant to us a vision of himself, holy and lifted up, and open our eyes to see his glory which fills and irradiates the earth.

Isaiah had a vision of need. So has every prophet and every minister who has power with men. First there is the feeling of personal lack and of utter failure if left to oneself. No one can succeed anywhere in that which is worth while, and especially in the ministry, who feels himself sufficient. A vision of God always brings the knowledge of insufficiency. It is not the basely wicked who feel the sense of sin most. Often it is the purest soul that is most sensitive of failure. Moses pled unworthiness when chosen to be the leader of God's ancient people, and Amos when called to preach in Israel disclaimed prophetic gifts. Peter felt himself a sinful man in the presence of Jesus, and Paul knew he was strongest when most conscious of his own weakness. The feeling of need always follows a vision of God, and it is the sign of his presence and the assurance of his help. Isaiah felt the need in those around him also. He not only recognized their undone condition, but he could feel the hurt of a brother's woe, and was even more sensitive than they to the sorrow which their sin was breeding. The sense of the need

of God in oneself and in the world is an important factor in the call of the ministry.

The world's need of God was never more apparent than it is now, to those who have the vision to see. The false foundations of society are crumbling, and the systems built thereon are falling about the ears of those who constructed them with such confidence. Our fear for the world just now is due to the fact that the elements in human relationships responsible for this disaster are not confined to central Europe. We are sensible of the failure of a certain type of civilization. We feel the need of something different. But that need is not well-defined. If the world is to profit by its awful experience during the dreadful years of war, prophets must arise, not a few but many, who recognize the need of God on the part of every community and of every man.

The vision of God and the vision of need together spell OPPORTUNITY in capital letters. God is always present, and the need of humanity is perennial, therefore the door of opportunity is always open before him who sees. But here again the present world conditions aid our vision. Against the background of a world torn asunder by war, objects stand out in bold relief which before we could not see. Many things are clearer today to him who has vision, and they may be more easily pointed out to him whose sight has been dis-

torted by ignorance or dimmed by selfishness. Men trained to discern between good and evil are demanded by the unsettled conditions of the present to guide the bewildered hosts of humanity into safety and peace. In the days of Jesus not many mighty were called, but the common people heard him gladly. The growing spirit of democracy makes for progress in the kingdom of God, and gives larger opportunity for the Christian minister. Kings have been tumbling from their tottering thrones, and the passing of absolutism is demonstrating in high places the truthfulness of the principle enunciated by Jesus that he who saves his life will lose it. These conditions increase the church's opportunity to dominate the world-order with the saving spirit of self-giving. The breaking down of barriers built up by monarchical ambitions facilitates the flow of a common life through the races of men, and enlarges the opportunity for the spread of the gospel of Christ. The stream of khaki-clad youths of America, running together from every corner of the country, and distributing itself along the battle-pressed frontiers of freedom, is symbolic of the new opportunity for the interflow of the divine life generated in the churches. Every community has become a world community, and every church is a great church if it has the power of God; for the world is its field of conquest for the Master. Every minister in the remotest district of the country, preaching to his little congregation, and lead-

ing his flock in the pastures of divine grace and truth, is a vital and moving factor in the life of this great throbbing world.

The world has been shaken up, and shaken apart, and shaken to pieces. There are needed heralds of the Master to throw the gospel magnet into this mass of disintegrated humanity. The power of Jesus to purify and unite mankind is this world's only hope. Man's extremity is God's opportunity. The collapse of that civilization which was built upon the philosophy of materialism and might, makes way for a renewed trial and a larger application of the principles and spirit of Jesus. His principles are not self-perpetuating. Neither can we trust their administration to some magic hand of fate. Men are needed, flesh and blood men, but men who are filled with the Holy spirit, impelled onward and upward by the divine imperative, and thrilled by a holy passion for a lost world. Ministers must arise who know how to point men to Jesus for salvation, who can organize society on a Christian basis, and who will lead the church triumphantly in the glorious task of a world evangelism.

“Then I said, Here am I; send me.”

CHRISTIAN CO-OPERATION

Text:—Till we all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God. Ephesians 4:13.

The present world conditions, the spirit of the times, and the temper of the Christian Church, all combine to bring into prominence the principle of co-operation, and call for its application to the great task of spiritual ministry to a needy world. Because of the inconsistency of this call to Christian co-operation it cannot be ignored by him who aspires to a place of leadership in the Church. And because these voices are not always consistent, but clash with each other, it is a matter that calls for thoughtful consideration. There is a oneness of life which the Master longed to see in his disciples, and for which he prayed. This oneness typified in the relationship of the Son to the Father, can be secured only through a common sonship of all believers. It is not, therefore, a matter for juggling, or some combination to be secured according to methods used by cheap company promoters. It is not a thing to be advanced by precipitate action to bring into one organization all the churches. No action should be taken that would require

any communion of Christians to surrender an element of its faith. The very thing it is asked to surrender for the sake of union may be that which has given it missionary zeal, and may constitute its richest individual contribution to the life of the whole church. Therefore, church union on such a basis would weaken the total impact of the Christian Church upon the world, rather than strengthen it. The primary colors when passed through a prism become one white light. Likewise shades of truth held by different denominations may be passed through the prism of co-operative Christianity and shine out in the world, one clear and steady flame. But the light becomes imperfect as one particular color is eliminated or fades. Let us pray to be delivered from the colossal calamity of a colorless religion.

A study of the Christian denominations as they exist today in Protestantism reveals two general facts which should be reckoned with in discussing any form of Christian union. First, there are Christian communions which are separated from all others by some distinct doctrine or practice, which is held as an historical heritage, and as a matter of loyalty to divine revelation. Second, there are distinct groups which include members of one denominational family, and which are separated from each other not by doctrinal beliefs, but by minor differences of polity and organization.

I stop with this simple statement of fact, for I have no desire to undertake the endless and thankless task of classifying the all but numberless denominations according to the division here made. It is not necessary to my purpose. Neither is it in harmony with my viewpoint, for I would leave to each denomination, and to every individual Christian, the question of what is necessary to a virile faith, letting service and personal religious satisfaction be the final test. A recognition, however, of this distinction in defining denominations must necessarily influence one in discussing the question of Christian co-operation.

The recent reunion of the various branches of the Lutheran church is an example of what may be expected to transpire in the case of other groups of Christians. It is something that all will welcome who deplore the many divisions of the church on national or other artificial lines. The elimination of every temporary cause for division drives the church back upon the verities of faith, and brings to the front those fundamental truths upon which Christianity must finally rest. The fact may not be apparent at first, but to my mind the Faith and Order Movement is accelerating this tendency to union on the part of denominations that claim little doctrinal differences. When the study of the faith and order of another denomination discovers them to be in practical harmony with our own the question naturally

arises, why not unite? Of course such union is promoted by the spirit which possesses all Christians in these days not only of tolerance, but of mutual confidence. This spirit is quite different from that which prevailed in colonial days when a certain Episcopal church of New England could write back to the mother church in England, "We are consistently offensive to those that are without." In relating this incident, Bishop Anderson of that church said, "We are determined in these days to reveal our love for God in some other way than by showing spite for each other."

The question of Christian co-operation may be considered from two distinct viewpoints. We may think of co-operation as opposed to exclusiveness, and consider how it may advance the interest of the Kingdom of Christ in the world, as all believers in our Lord work together. On the other hand we may seek to prove that co-operation in Christian service is more important to the work of the church in the immediate future than "organic union," which many seem to think is the next step in Christian progress.

There is little that needs to be said here in favor of the first proposition. Co-operation among the Protestant churches of our country, especially through the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, has been recognized as a settled policy and as a practical

method for a number of years. And the Great War, with its tremendous moral tasks and its insistent call for united action on the part of all Christian forces, has strengthened this principle among the churches formerly co-operating, and has brought into this fellowship of service communions that have been hesitant hitherto. For most Protestant churches, therefore, co-operation is a present reality, and from this position of larger opportunity and greater service forward-looking denominations are not likely to take a backward step.

In regard to the question of Christian co-operation as over against church union; it is one as yet unsettled, but one that must be given consideration in the immediate future. In many instances the union of denominations will mean nothing more than the taking on of a new name. In certain cases it will not mean even so much as that, but will require simply the removal of a modifier or the elimination of a hyphen. But to carry this process very far it will be necessary to cut across helpful traditions, and to sever cords that bind the present to a cherished past. The organic union of all churches, even in the Protestant branch of Christendom, as urged by certain ardent advocates of one great denomination, would violate the conscientious convictions of many good Christians, and would reduce to a mutual admiration society the church of Jesus Christ. No doubt there are many Christians who could

unite with all the followers of our Lord on the common basis of faith in him, and without a compromise of conviction or loss of piety. But the question may well be raised as to whether the progress of truth, which alone makes men free, can best be promoted along that line. Truth may be considered in two ways: as something to be believed, and as something to be lived. To have value as life-stuff it must be lived. And right here is the point of separation between him who believes in the co-operation of churches loyal to truth as they severally comprehend and live it, and him who advocates the speedy union of all churches in one great organization. **Truth must not be stifled.** Of course there is a type of person who readily subscribes to the idea of one church. Men who are infatuated with bigness, and who mistake ponderosity for power. There are narrow souls who have a fear of being thought narrow. Such live attenuated lives, and spread themselves out so thin that they have to stand twice in a place to make a shadow. When the church would take an inventory of its strength in order to battle with sin these thinned-out Christians cannot be found. The church must have in it men of conviction; men who hold hearty allegiance to Jesus Christ, and who while charitable to all, are unwavering in their loyalty to truth, and are faithful to every religious rite and practice which brings spiritual satisfaction and strengthens faith. A League of Nations is a

means of steadying and strengthening international relations, and will therefore be a boon to mankind. Bolshevistic internationalism is more comprehensive perhaps, but it is a menace to society, because it is irresponsible, lacking anchorage and substantial elements of adhesion. The analogy is doubtless apparent as applied to the present discussion.

The way is open and the time is opportune for the co-operation of all Christians in the work of reconstructing a world destroyed by war, and of rebuilding a broken humanity. The bigness of the task ahead demands the sympathetic and intelligent service of all Christians in a symphony of prayer and in one mighty program of action. Of course there must be back of it all consecrated lives, constantly nourished on the bread of divine truth, and invigorated by allegiance to the crucified Christ. Co-operation is essential to the work of the church. But it must be the co-operation of men and women whose lives are rooted in the soil of Scripture, and whose characters are stiffened to stand against the storms of doubt and discouragement through an unfailing loyalty to every religious conviction.

Union by the process of elimination is negative, and therefore destructive. As a method it will succeed temporarily, or until certain minor causes of division have been removed. But the church cannot safely proceed far on

that road. Positive and constructive grounds must be sought, which will give it permanency and power. The War has taught us the value of co-operation in other fields of activity, and has increased our consciousness of its value in Christian work. But the War has taught us another great lesson, also, which has its application in the realm of religion. It has taught us to use every ounce of energy and to reckon every element of strength. Every church and denomination owes it to humanity to cherish and to propagate every truth that is vital to its faith, and that seems to it to be of service in establishing the Kingdom of God in the earth.

The practice of Christian co-operation opens a two-fold opportunity before the Seventh Day Baptist minister. First, there is the opportunity of giving his support, and the support of the church he serves, and possibly of the denomination to which he belongs, to every good cause which demands the united effort of the Christian church. Second, it gives him the privilege of rendering to the whole church the particular service of keeping before the minds of its leaders the peculiar truth which separates his denomination from other communions. I can think of no mightier challenge to our young men of mettle.

It is no easy task that the Master calls you to, but it is of a piece with that to which he gave himself while on earth. The one who

hears the call and obeys the voice may be sure of the inspiration and help of Jesus who invites him to this high and holy service.

Society has been dissolved in the hot liquid of public opinion, simmering over a world on fire. There must be an amalgamation, and the loadstone is the Bible. The minister who can preach the Word intelligently and without compromise or apology, has the only remedy for the world's ills. I speak to you, young men, because you are strong. You who hear my voice and listen to my words, will you not in the quiet of your own soul's inner chamber, hearken to the voice of the Holy Spirit. Perchance he calls you now, or will call you as you open your heart to him. Gladly yield your life to him, to be used according to his purpose.

Sabbath-keeping young men, born of Sabbath-keeping parents, as was the Master himself, and John and Paul, to you I bring this challenge. Young men, reared in Christian homes, taught to love truth and to revere the Word of God; to you a sinful, selfish, struggling world is calling for the ministry of healing. Take the life God has given you, take the faith your mother has nourished in you, take the preparation your father is giving you; take the grace which the Master will bestow; take all that you are and all that you hope to be, and lay all on the altar of Christ. If he can use you as a minister of his there is a waiting field

in the Seventh day Baptist ministry, and its bounds are as wide as the world.

“Till we all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God.”

THE HOLY SABBATH

Text—"And God blessed the seventh day, and hallowed it."—Genesis 2:3a; "The Sabbath was made for man."—Mark 2:27.

The present and compelling need of every generation is a sense of the presence of God. To uncover in the heart of man his native longing for God, and to make him conscious of the divine imminence, is the chief responsibility of the minister of the Gospel. It is his office to discover the means of divine grace that have been provided, and to administer them in the fear of the Lord and for the cure of souls. His source book of divine revelation is the Bible. From it he draws inspiration, and by its teachings his own feet are guided. In his work of rescuing men from the thralldom of sin and leading them out into the saving light of truth, the minister finds in the word of God both his polestar and his power.

One of the institutions provided for the blessing of man, as revealed in Holy Writ, is the Sabbath. The significance of the Sabbath in the revelation of God to man, and its place in man's worship of God, are matters which can not escape the conscientious student of the word. The Sabbath is the culminating and

crowning work of God in creating a world inhabitable by man. According to the author of the first creation story as recorded in Genesis, the earth was not made fit for the abode of man when all creature comforts had been provided, but only when the presence of God had been assured, through the symbolism of a holy day. The Sabbath played an important part in the development of the Hebrew religion, which gave birth to Jesus, and which was the bud that blossomed into Christianity. There were husks of the old religion which fell away on account of the bursting life of the new, but one of the petals which compose the flower of Christianity, and hold its fragrance of heavenly incense, is the Holy Sabbath. Because of the place which the Sabbath occupies in the Word of God, because it is a needed symbolism of the presence of God in the world, and typifies and promotes the worship-life of men, and because it is a neglected truth, necessary to the full enjoyment of the life of obedience and faith, I challenge our young people to become ministers of a whole Gospel and messengers of Sabbath truth. There will be those who will say you are magnifying the importance of an indifferent matter. But nothing that develops obedience or promotes piety can be considered unimportant. He must certainly be considered a superficial character who would lightly pass judgment upon the relative importance of various phases of God-ordained truth. The question can never be that of the Sabbath as against

some more vital truth. The Sabbath rightly held and properly observed promotes spirituality and is the friend of all truth. The Sabbath is more fundamental to the life of the church, and bears a closer relation to vital godliness, than most Christians think. Because of its fundamental place in advancing the Kingdom of Christ, and in promoting the Christian life, there is a call for ministers who understand its character and appreciate its value, not only to teach Sabbath truth, but to be living witnesses of the spiritual value of Sabbath-keeping. I do not mean men with a "holier than thou" attitude. I mean men filled with the Holy Spirit, and who are more sensible of the presence of God in the world on account of his holy time-symbol, the blessed Sabbath day. The Sabbath may be held in such a way as to come between men and God. It may become an **object** of worship rather than a **means** of worship and its observance partake of a form of idolatry. This was the case with the Pharisees. In a similar fashion many Christians today bow down before the bread of the Holy Supper, and worship the material representation of the Son of God. No doubt the minute and formal rules of the Pharisees in respect to the Sabbath influenced the church in its gradual forsaking of the Sabbath. But the Sabbath of the Pharisees was a late development, growing out of that period of Jewish history which produced no sacred writing and gave birth to no prophet. Jesus to whom was given

all authority in heaven and upon earth, and who spoke not as the Pharisees, went back to the original purpose of the Sabbath, which he said was made for man. The Master's Sabbath-keeping was in harmony with the highest conception of the prophets of old, who recognized its ethical character, and by his spirit and attitude he gave it the stamp of a Christian institution which increased its power to promote the spiritual life of men.

The call for young men who shall become heralds of Sabbath truth, is a challenge to those who have experienced the joy of Sabbath-keeping, and who realize and appreciate the place the Sabbath has taken in the spiritual life of the race. The call is not to the narrow-minded or the bigot. It is not to him who thinks he is sounding the full harmony of divine revelation when in fact he is but picking one string in the orchestra of spiritual truth. However, the lack of appreciation of Sabbath truth on the part of so many who minister in the church does emphasize the call for Sabbath advocates. God's holy Sabbath, trodden upon and neglected, needs preachers who are broad in their sympathies and devoted to truth, and who are deeply conscious of the world's need of the vitalizing influence of the sacred seventh day of scripture, the Sabbath of Christ. In order that such men may be found, or be forthcoming, it will be necessary for our young men, and all of us, to take a new inventory of the

spiritual assets of the race. The paucity of the church's life, and its impotency in the presence of the world's need, give us pause and lead us to consider the reasons for the church's failure, in order if possible to restore her power and revive her glory. Many things will need correcting, but there is no doubt but what the failure of the church to recognize the Sabbath of Jehovah and of his Christ has impoverished its life and drained its power.

Shakespeare invokes blessings upon him who first invented sleep. "Sleep that knits up the raveled sleeve of care." The night follows the day of labor, when the body is rested and the mind refreshed for the renewed activities of another day. I do not mean to say that the Sabbath was made for sleep, either at home or in church. The provision of the night time for such use precludes that necessity. But there is a striking analogy between the provision of Providence for physical rest, and the appointment and sanctifying of a definite and particular time for spiritual recuperation and renewal. Soldiers say that shell shock is produced only when they do not know the shell is coming. If one hears the whine of the shell his nervous system prepares for the explosion. The Sabbath with its worship and with its call to the consideration of the things of the spirit, prepares the soul for the shell shock of the week's experience in the work of life. It provides the weekly mountain top of transfigura-

tion, when the Master is seen in radiant glory, the law of God is revealed, and the prophets sanction and inspire our worship. This service the Sabbath renders because it is an institution of divine appointment and has a sacred character. A seventh day of rest, worked out upon the basis of our physical requirements and appointed by the authority of men, could but have a salutary influence upon society. But the crowning glory of the Sabbath of the Bible is its holy character. It has been made sacred by divine appointment, by the place it occupies in revelation and by the holy uses to which it was put in the ministry of Jesus. Leaders are needed who themselves are followers of Jesus, and who can lead the people along the highway of holiness. On this highroad of life the Sabbath is at once a way-marker and a mile-post. It is a guide to the weary pilgrim, and it provides him at regular stages of the journey with a prepared and sheltered place for rest and spiritual refreshment. The world, weary and sin-sick, needs nothing more than it needs to feel the presence and power of a benevolent and righteous God. It is imperative that every means divinely appointed shall be used to bring to bear upon a waiting world the truth that God lives and cares for men. He who holds the Sabbath to be a regular and frequent expression of the Father's love brings to his ministry a spiritual asset and a means of grace not known to him who ignores this vital truth. Men, busy and preoccupied with the necessary

burdens of life, need frequent and somewhat obvious reminders of God's interest in them. But reminders meaningful and able to command a growing appreciation and to contribute increasing spiritual satisfaction. The weekly Sabbath, ordained of God, and holy, is a means at hand for this high service. Priests of God and ministers of his word are needed to break this Sabbath-bread to a waiting and hungry world. On the other hand, also, true spiritual Sabbath-keeping is an expression of love to God, and becomes a mode of worship and a method of praise. Where men walk not in their own ways and think not their own thoughts on God's holy day, but reserve the Sabbath for thoughts of God, and for social worship and spiritual ministry for others, the Sabbath becomes a buttress to character and a means of spiritual growth. Ministers are needed to lead men into a new appreciation and a proper use of this heaven-ordained means of grace.

The specific task before the preacher of Sabbath truth is two-fold; to stimulate and strengthen a Sabbath conscience in those who profess Sabbath principles and who now observe the day, and to be evangelists of the Sabbath message to a Sabbathless world. There is no question but what a more intelligent, thoughtful, and careful regard for the Sabbath day, and use of its holy hours, would promote piety, increase godliness, and make our

churches powers in a world service. Pastors are greatly needed who can inspire our people with a new sense of privilege as Sabbath-keepers, and to a renewed and intelligent loyalty; and who can lead the churches into a fuller life and a larger service. And these pastors, these ministers for whom the call is sounding out in unmistakable urgency, must be men capable of meeting the world with their message of Sabbath truth. During the last ten or twelve years the Protestant churches of America have made great progress in co-operative service in many lines. But the very work done in co-operation with others has strengthened each individual denomination. Today some of the early leaders in securing the co-operation of the churches are taking less interest in such service and are devoting themselves to the question of the union of the denominations. One would be rash to undertake to prophesy regarding the question of church union. No doubt there are shoals ahead. A union of churches can not stand on a base built by compromise of truth. Unity of spirit and co-operation in service there may be even when fundamental matters of faith and practice prevent organic union. To these principles Seventh Day Baptists are committed, not only by action of Conference, but by their long history of such co-operative service. But they hold the Sabbath to be an essential part of divine revelation and its observance necessary to true Christian obedience. Larger

opportunities will accompany the elimination of minor denominational differences. This neglected but vital truth of the Bible and Christianity, no longer overshadowed by mere forms of worship or methods of organization, will then have its chance in the Christian church. Level headed men are needed, men of character and learning, who are loyal to the Kingdom and devoted to truth, to stand in the ways of men and hold aloft the blazing torch of Sabbath truth. May the young men from our Sabbath-keeping homes and churches who have convictions on this question, hear the challenge and heed the call of God. The call is for ministers generous in spirit, but unshaken in their convictions; consistent preachers of the Word of God, to proclaim, if not to a united church, to a less prejudiced and more open-minded church, a neglected truth. The situation demands, and the opportunity calls for men who have the courage of the reformer and the devotion of the saint of Paul's type, to preach the Gospel of salvation to men and to carry the message of Sabbath blessing to the Christian church and to the world.

“And God blessed the seventh day, and hallowed it.”

“The Sabbath was made for man.”

THE ALLURING CITY

Text:—"I must also see Rome." Acts
19:21.

When Paul spoke the words of our text he was in the city of Ephesus on the shore of the Aegean sea at the western fringe of Asia, looking toward the ever-beckoning west. If westward the course of empire takes its way, it is because individual men, daring and free, have not only looked and longed, but have braved the hardship of pioneer life, and have pushed their way onward toward the setting sun. On a former occasion Paul had heard the Macedonian cry come ringing across this same sea, and had responded by carrying the message of the Cross into Europe as far as Macedonia and Greece. As he again reaches the western edge of Asia and looks westward over the sea, in imagination he leaps beyond the territory of his former labors and sees the capital of the world. He feels its lure and his pulsating purpose finds expression in these simple words, throbbing with hope and endeavor: "I must also see Rome."

For all of us there is waiting somewhere beyond our horizon the city of our dreams. For some of us it is not far away and is not

worth the pilgrimage. For others there are the intervening waters to be crossed, and the mountains to be climbed, but the goal is so worthy that even if it be not reached the one who sets out for it receives an ample reward in its pursuit. What was the character of the city which Paul sought, and what was his purpose in determining to go there? Paul was determined to see Rome. What was the character of that city? and what was it that lured him on, pulling him with a mighty and compelling power?

Rome was a city of pleasure. Of all the cities in all the world at that time doubtless Rome had them all beat for gayety and glitter and show. All the froth of the social set in all the petty capitals of the provinces floated into the capital of the empire, and every diversion known to high society among the idle rich could be found in Rome. I have no doubt that in Paul's day there were young people throughout the provinces who longed to go to Rome for pleasure. The artificial pleasures of their restricted circle palled on them, and they longed for the infatuation of the gayer life of Rome. But this was not Paul's motive. He longed to go to Rome; more than that, he was determined to go, but it was not for his own pleasure. He had higher interests to serve.

Rome was the world's business center. To this center of big business gravitated the capitalists of the empire. Out over those splendid roads that radiated from the imperial city went the trade that brought wealth to her merchants; and her ships sailed into every port, carrying her commerce, and bringing back the riches of the world.

There is always something alluring in the field of business endeavor. Young men who feel themselves capable of success find it a fascinating adventure to strike out on a business career. It is not uncommon to find young men becoming dissatisfied with the business prospects at their native cross-roads or in their own home town. The ambition to succeed in business and to excel in some line, early stirs in the heart and mind of every normal youth. Success in some small sphere sets to glimmering a boundless field of opportunity, and with radiant hope the young man sets out to conquer new worlds. He seeks an environment favorable to a larger success, and a situation more in harmony with his growing capabilities. We have all seen the working of this law of expanding life.

I have no doubt it was as true in the ancient day as it is in our time. Of course our new sense of freedom and the increased facilities for travel have accentuated this tendency in modern business life. In our day of highly

organized society more young people follow their own particular bent; and in the demand for specialists they find their field in the centers of population. It is not unlikely, however, that in Paul's day multitudes of young men sought a business career in Rome, and many others throughout the provinces longed to try their luck in this big business center. They had had some success at Jerusalem or Joppa, at Tarsus or Troas, and they felt that their business capacity was equal to a larger opportunity elsewhere. So they longed to go to Rome. The Jews did go everywhere, into all the cities, and they succeeded.

But this again was not what moved Paul to say that he must see Rome. True to the traditions of his race Paul was a business success. As a tent maker he supported himself while devoting much time to the preaching of the Gospel. Doubtless he could have gained wealth had he devoted himself to the development of his trade. And Rome would have offered him his opportunity. But it was not for this that Paul wished to see Rome.

Rome was a literary and art center. The most famous literati and the most celebrated artists of the ancient world could doubtless be found in Rome. Every budding poet with his bundle of poems, and every coming artist with his roll of canvass desired to go to Rome where his talents could be tested out and

where his productions would be appreciated. It is quite important that the coming out of a musical artist shall be properly staged, and that the event be attended by the people whose opinion counts in musical circles, and whose presence will give prestige to the debutante. Only a big city can supply these necessary accompaniments of a proper debut. In like manner the budding author seeks the stamp of some popular publisher on the back of his book. It goes to show that the manuscript has been examined and passed upon, and adjudged to be of value by experts in the literary field. It is not unlikely that in Paul's day aspiring authors desired to go to Rome. Conscious of his ability to write, and feeling the lack of appreciation on the part of the people of his own provincial town, many a poor author has longed for means to take him to Rome. Once there he knows he could succeed.

Paul was an author whose writings have outlived most books written in that day, but his success depended in no way on his being in Rome. Some of his best writings were produced before he ever saw that city. It was not for the purpose of securing a name as an author that Paul would see Rome.

Rome was a political center. If Rome surpassed other cities in any one thing it was in its political power. Athens and Alexandria may have rivaled Rome as a literary and edu-

cational center, and Venice vied with her for first place in commerce. But in the field of politics Rome had no rival. Here the emperor with his satellites ruled supreme. From here appointments were made to military and civil offices throughout the empire. A pull was necessary to secure an appointment, and this often made necessary a journey to Rome. I doubt not many a young man in the provinces of the empire longed to go to Rome, lured by the possibility of an appointment to some petty office. If he could get to Rome, and could get the ear of the powers that be, he might after a few years return as governor of his own home city. It would be mighty fine to make the companions of his youth stand up and take notice, or go back and sit down, according to his own whim and pleasure. Perhaps many bankrupted themselves to purchase citizenship in the empire for the purpose of gaining office.

Paul was a Roman citizen, and was proud to proclaim himself Roman born. His citizenship stood him in good stead on more than one occasion, but he never made capital out of his citizenship for political purposes. No such ambition moved Paul to declare his purpose to visit this great city.

Why did Paul want to go to Rome? Where shall we look for an answer? The answer is found in the first chapter of his letter to the

Romans. Paul's mighty motive, his impelling purpose was service. There were in Rome these obvious worldly advantages which we have outlined, and which are found in every great city. The city was teeming, too, with men and women self-centered and bent on their own pleasure. But there was a little group of men and women, also, who were followers of the Nazarene. These were struggling in that wicked city to live pure lives, and it was to this group that Paul desired to minister. Through them—the salt of the earth—he hoped to save the city, and ultimately the world. It was this flickering flame burning but obscurely, which Paul wished to fan into a blaze that would kindle the fires of righteousness throughout the world. Paul the preacher of the Gospel, Paul the daring missionary of the Cross, Paul the Christian Statesman, must also see Rome, in order that he may plant the seeds of righteousness in that world center. The history of the Christian Church has justified his ambition, and has set the seal of success upon his efforts. Paul chose wisely, and has become an example and an inspiration to aspiring youth of all the generations since his time.

I would not seem to rob life of its legitimate pleasures. There are many things in life to enjoy. We have no call to be down-cast and glum. But the real joys of life are for those who realize life's purpose, and who accept its responsibility. He is not happiest who

selfishly seeks his own pleasure. He who panders his own appetites soon finds that satisfaction can not be found in that direction. As he multiplies these artificial stimuli his capacity to enjoy decreases, and hope is eaten out by despair. Life's real joy lies in another direction. He alone knows what happiness is who finds it in friendships formed on the high plane of worthy endeavor, and deepened through a common service and sacrifice.

I would say nothing to dampen the worthy ambition of any one who has a desire for material success in any legitimate vocation of life. Such dreams are normal, and but lead our young people on to take their place in the world's work. These reconstruction days call for men of vast business ability to solve the questions of production, conservation, and distribution. There must be a material foundation for the new civilization of which the modern prophets dream. The democratization of the nations of mankind will make it more imperative than ever before that men and women shall prepare themselves for intelligent citizenship, which carries with it the obligation of some to hold office. But underneath it all, and permeating all our life, there must be the spirit of service. There must be the desire to live for others: to sacrifice, and if need be to die, in order that materialism may not dominate the life of the world. If the world is to be saved there must be brave men

like Paul who will be willing to risk everything, and to lay all on the altar of sacrifice, in order to build up the Church of Christ in the centers of population. By an experience with the risen Christ, and through an abiding fellowship with Him, the spirit of love became in Paul a dynamic that sent him into the great and wicked city on a mission of service. With such a motive for his life, no power could stay him, and no opposition discourage. He counted not his life dear, and even though death awaited him he counted it all joy for the excellency of that blessed name. It mattered not that finally when he did reach Rome it was as a prisoner in bonds. Even so, the opportunity was given to render the service there that he longed to give.

We count Paul a success. The blessing and helpfulness of his life reach down through the centuries and are potent for our time. He demonstrated the value of ideals, the power of justice, and the strength of right. Because for these principles men will still dare to die the world wags on, with humanity's star in the ascendant. This spirit of service and sacrifice must be carried into humanity's peace time problems. Only the Church of Jesus Christ can give men this vision. The Gospel of a world Redeemer, who can save selfish and sinful humanity, must be brought to bear upon the life of our cities. If the world is to be won for Christ, our cities must be saved. Every-

where are the little groups, such as Paul found at Rome. Their value to the Kingdom, and their service to the world can not be measured by their numbers. Strong leaders are needed to build up in the great cities of our country little groups of loyal consecrated followers of the Master, for peradventure for the sake of the fifty, or even ten, the city may be saved.

“I must also see Rome.”

THE OPEN COUNTRY

Text: "He was manifest in another form unto two of them, as they walked, on their way into the country." Mark 16: 12.

The call of the country parish is coming up clear and insistent from every quarter of the land. The country-dweller is coming into his own in material things, but this new prosperity will prove a blessing only when the forces of righteousness shall control and direct the awakening life of a rehabilitated countryside. The country church, under the leadership of a consecrated, country-loving pastor, must dominate the community life with spiritual ideals, and organize the Christian forces of an awakened membership for Kingdom service.

I shall not attempt to discuss in full the specific problems of the rural church. That there is a rural church problem must be acknowledged because of the fact that there are so many country churches today standing idle, rotting on their timbers. No doubt some of these churches ought never to have been built. They must give way in order that some other church, which is really fostering the religious life of the community, may not be hampered and hindered in its divine ministry to all the people of the neighborhood. Where the community is over-churched the inefficient

church must pass. No doubt it is still true however, that many a country church is dead, and many others are living at a poor dying rate, while scores of country folk living within a "team-haul" and needing its ministry never darken its doors, or meet anywhere else for public worship. The natural location and surroundings of the country church condition its work and increase its problems. Its isolation and the scattered condition of those whom it seeks to serve make a situation not easily met. The standards of life in many rural communities are low, and are likely to drift toward a dead level, which is always lowering. That condition has too long prevailed in our country districts whereby the community oil has all been poured into the lamp of the "bright boy," and the pride of the community has centered in the man who has gone out from the little settlement and has made a name for himself in the world.

The church that is lifting its eyes toward the great wide world, in a sense, may be the best fitted to meet the religious needs of the local community. But the feeling must be overcome that the church can express itself through a few chosen individuals while the membership in general remain irresponsive to the Kingdom interests about them. Community life must be developed in its own terms. Some one has well said that "the task of the country church is to maintain and enlarge both indi-

vidual and community ideals under the inspiration and guidance of the religious motives, and to help the rural people to incarnate these ideals in personal and family life, in industrial effort and in political development, and in all social relationships."

In some great day
 The country church
 Will find its voice,
 And it will say:

"I stand in the fields
 Where the great earth yields
 Her bounties of fruit and grain;
 Where the furrows turn
 'Till the plowshares burn,
 As they came 'round and 'round again;
 Where the workers pray
 With their tools all day
 In the sunshine and shadow and rain.

"And I bid them tell
 Of the crops they sell,
 And speak of the work they have done;
 I speed every man
 In his hope and plan
 And follow his day with the sun;
 And grasses and trees
 The birds and the bees,
 I know and feel every one.

"And out of it all,
 As the seasons fall,
 I build my great temple alway;
 I point to the skies
 But my footstone lies
 In commonplace work of the day;
 For I preach the worth
 Of native earth—
 To love and to work is to pray."

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We need such a leadership in the rural church as will help her to find this voice, even as Dean Bailey prophesies. Leaders are needed who have a realizing sense of the presence of God in his world; who are sensitive to the divine voice, and who believe that for many people God's will can best be worked out in connection with the cultivation of the soil. Some one has said, "The cultivation of the soil is secondary to the cultivation of the soul." This is quite true. But it is not a question of the cultivation of the soul as over against that of the cultivation of the soil, but of cultivating the soul while cultivating the soil.

"The church assumes no temporal authority as lord of the parish, but is rather the heart, supplying the life-blood of the Gospel to every member, and inspiring the activities of moral and social progress." It must be a spiritual center, providing a common place of worship, but no amount of effort put forth to impose upon rural folk a spiritual leadership of the brand of the middle ages will succeed. What is needed is not that the qualities of life shall be pigeonholed, the religious qualities drawn out on occasion, but that every activity of life shall be shot through with the religious motive. Instead of branding everything related to the industrial life as secular and therefore essentially and forever opposed to spirituality, every vocational and social activity of rural life should be given its rightful and religious significance.

Religious zealots of the past have tried to make the world over and to fill it with miracle and wonder, so as to appeal to a falsely-keyed spiritual sense, declaring that only the miraculous has religious significance. What we really need to do is to attune our spirits to the multitudinous voice of God in the divinely ordered universe. It may be well to believe, and to be thrilled with the thought, that Jehovah fought for Israel on that day when Joshua commanded the sun to stand still upon Gibeon and the moon in the valley of Ajalon. But may we not receive daily help from the consciousness that God is with us in the rising of the sun over Pine Hill or the moon in the Loup Valley. It is a curious thing that as soon as we begin to learn something about how a thing is done in the natural order, we immediately declare that God is not in it, or at least not to that degree that he is in the miracle; and that which should bring him nearer because helping us to understand him better, instead drives him farther from us. I remember very well an effort some years ago by an old soldier to prove to me that "Providence Spring" was falsely so called. This spring of fresh water broke out just inside the dead line in Andersonville Prison, and it came as such a relief to the famishing prisoners who had only a limited supply of the foulest kind of water that it was called by them Providence Spring, many believing that a pitying God had provided it. But my aged soldier friend had dis-

covered that it could be accounted for by the natural slope of the surrounding land, by the condition of the soil where the spring broke forth, and by a rainy season. These were very natural reasons, easily explained, and therefore to his mind there was nothing providential about it.

I am not denying that often the ways of Providence are past finding out. But I do say that many times we discover God in the natural order. And here is the opportunity, especially in the rural community, for the minister who appreciates the religious significance of the book of nature to help men to learn the lessons it would teach. When men asked Jesus for a miracle-sign he condemned them for their lack of faith. We ask God for a wand and instead he gives us a hoe. This is far better, for it indicates a closer relationship between God and men. It is a wonderful privilege to be able to co-operate with God in reclaiming the earth and in making it serve the higher ends of life. It is a blessed thing to be permitted to serve a God whom you can really help; one who reveals so much of his plans and methods that you can assist intelligently in making them serve their benevolent and eternal purposes. We need leaders who can appreciate the fact that industrial life, especially of the rural sort, furnishes opportunities to work in harmony with the divine plan, and to promote the divine ideal.

The right kind of pastoral leadership will be progressive, but it will not be self-assertive. He makes a mistake who loads himself down with ready-made plans which he seeks to impose upon a church at the first opportunity, whether they fit or not, and whether or not the time is ripe and the people ready. The most successful plans for religious work are indigenous, native; the product of the very soil you cultivate; growing out of local conditions and needs, and flourishing in the atmosphere of present opportunity. Plans may be imported and adapted, but they must not be dragged in and flung at folks.

Once when I was a boy I overheard my mother and an Irish neighbor woman discussing the question of giving children disagreeable medicine. It seemed that my mother had had some difficulty with some of my brothers along this line. I remember quite distinctly Mrs. Feeley's advice. She said, "Trow 'em down and put your knee on 'em, like I do my Mikey." No doubt the neighbor woman's method was quicker and easier for her, where she had to overcome rebellion, but it was correspondingly hard on Mikey.

Denunciation is the easiest thing in the world; and the next easiest thing is to give advice. But the real task of the religious leader is to evolve methods of Christian work among his people which shall express their own life,

and at the same time to lead to higher planes of religious thought and life. Dealing with nature and her products gives occasion for reflection upon God's providences. This reflection gives enlargement of soul, and makes one sensitive to the divine in all about him. These awakened forces should be harnessed up to the great tasks of the kingdom of God. This can be done, not by segregating religion from the daily life, but by organizing all life's activities upon the religious basis. And the church should be so organized that when every department is functioning properly each member gives conscious expression to its life.

The rural church should be the center of the social life of the community. That is, provision for the social needs of all classes and of all ages in the community should be included in the program of the church of the open country. And this should not be provided for as a concession to a certain "worldly class," and for the declared purpose of barring "worse evils," but because the church sees in the social and recreative instincts a real religious asset, and an opportunity for positive moral and religious training. Perhaps there are those who would have me throw in a warning here against the dangers of such a social program under the auspices of the church. I grant that it carries with it a great responsibility, but this the live church desires and is glad to assume where so great a service can be rendered. Let me with

greater emphasis, warn against the danger of not taking care of the social life of the country folk.

In the language of Kenyon L. Butterfield: "The countryside is calling, calling for men. Vexing problems of labor and life disturb our minds in country as well as in city. The workers of the land are striving to make better use of their resources of soil and climate, and are seeking both larger wealth and higher welfare. But the striving and the seeking raise new questions of great concern. Social institutions have developed to meet these new issues. But the great need of the present is leadership. Only men can vitalize institutions. It is well enough to discuss the problem in its theoretical aspects. It is desirable to organize large movements on behalf of the rural church. But more than all else just now, we need a few men to achieve great results in the rural parish, to re-establish the leadership of the church. No organization can do it. No layman can do it. A preacher must do it—do it in spite of small salary, isolation, conservatism, restricted field, overchurching, or any other devil that shows its face. The call is imperative. Shall we be denied the men?"

"He was manifest in another form unto two of them, as they walked, on their way into the country."

MINISTERING WOMEN

Text: "Go tell my disciples that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me."
Matthew 28: 10.

These words spoken to women by the risen Christ constitute the divine commission to womankind to do definite Christian service. The "Fear not" with which this command was introduced was not spoken to allay physical fear. Literally "Last at the cross and first at the tomb," these women had shown a bravery which puts to shame the Master's own disciples who left him and fled. Their characteristic feminine loyalty knew no fear except the fear that they might be too late to perform the last loving service to the dead body of their Lord. They had followed Jesus out of Galilee, ministering unto him; they had stood beholding from afar when he was crucified, drawing nearer as the curious crowd melted away; they had watched the favorite Joseph as he placed the body in his own tomb; they had bought the spices before the sixth-day's sun should set, and then had "rested according to the commandment." The Sabbath being past they came with their final offering, late, but they trusted not too late, for love's anointing. But when they got there the tomb was empty, and

instead of finding the dead body of Jesus, the living Christ met them in the way, and sent them back with this triumphant message. It is impossible for the mind to imagine or the heart to conceive a happier privilege at that dark hour than that of carrying to the despairing disciples this message of Easter hope. And this happy privilege came to these women as a natural reward of their unfailing love and devotion. Worship put them in the way of service, and what they supposed should have been the last rite for the crucified, gave them the opportunity to carry the first message of the risen Christ.

Since the Church has received its interpretation of the Christ largely through the masculine mind, the place of women in the founding of Christianity perhaps has not been fully appreciated. Not that there have been studied omissions or deliberately false exposition, but it is possible, for instance, that Paul's logic, clear and convincing, has overshadowed to some degree the more subtle and poetic elements in the human relationships of Jesus, best mediated through the instinctive mind of woman. No woman wrote a Gospel of Jesus. But neither is it recorded that a woman ever spoke evil of him. Many men criticised, sought to condemn, and blasphemed the Master, but never a woman. Many women were associated with him in a way that reveals some of the finest adaptations of the divine Being to human needs.

The saved Samaritan woman brought a village to the feet of her Savior and the redeemed Magdalene followed her Master unfalteringly to the sad and tragic death on Calvary, and on through to the resurrection victory. Conspicuous among Paul's helpers in the gospel were certain noble women. The name of Priscilla is always mentioned in connection with that of her faithful husband, and usually her name stands first. Others who readily come to mind are Dorcas, "full of good works and almsdeeds;" Phoebe, "a servant of the church;" and Lydia, "one that worshipped God," and who became a disciple of Jesus. The first European convert to Christianity was a woman, Lydia, in whose home it seems quite certain the first church on that Continent was organized. The Philippian church was noted for its spirit of generosity, and we are not surprised when we consider the character of this generous spirited seller of purple, this God-fearing, Sabbath-keeping Gentile woman, who gave her heart and life to the Master, and to ministry in His name. She had forsaken the polytheistic faith of paganism for belief in one God, as taught in the purer religion of the Jews. Still open-minded and without prejudice, she accepts through Paul's preaching the true and warmer faith of Christianity. In this Sabbath afternoon prayer meeting at which only women were present (until searched out by the apostle

and his companions who on this first Sabbath in the strange city were looking for a place of prayer) the first church in Europe was born. Oriental ideas in regard to women, and the natural conservatism of the East, added of course to woman's natural modesty and the less conspicuous place always sought by the gentler sex, have served to keep the women of the early church in the background.

As pagan elements entered the church the pagan attitude toward women dominated Christianity, and women were forced farther into the background of Christian history. Again, as the Roman Hierarchy developed, and church propaganda became a matter of politics, it required masculine minds to manipulate kingdoms, to apply the inquisition, and to work the more than questionable financial schemes of the church. Women, as well as the finer type of men, were alienated from the church, or found a place only in the nunnery or cloister with no social outlook, and with no opportunity for Christian service in the modern sense.

As the spirit and principles of the Reformation rose and spread, one by one these pagan elements began to disappear and medieval prejudices to melt away. Reforms move slowly, however, and even today there are places where the principles of Christian freedom have

not penetrated, and churches that hold a neo-pagan view of women as related to a militant and aggressive Christianity. The last generation has seen greater progress along this line than has any other in the history of the Christian church. Those denominations that are governed by strict ecclesiastical laws, most of which were formulated in a more conservative age, are today modifying these freedom-restricting rules so as to give larger liberty to the women of the church in ecclesiastical matters. Education and the modern spirit of democracy are doing the same thing for those churches which claim a larger freedom in church polity, but which are often tightly bound by tradition and prejudice. Doubtless this change is due chiefly to two things. In the first place, this is a truth-loving generation. People generally believe that truth will make men free. Therefore, there is no desire on the part of honest men and women today to hold to a tradition, however hoary with age, if it is not based upon the eternal and immovable rock of truth. More and more, therefore, in things of religion, men are going back to the fountainhead of Christian truth: To the New Testament, to the Gospels, and to the life and teachings of Jesus. As this process goes on, pagan elements are eliminated, and ecclesiastical streaks inherited from a non-spiritual church are being washed out of the white garments of the pure Christian faith of the New Testament.

In the second place, this is a practical age. Men believe in doing things. They like to get things accomplished. This spirit is getting into the churches. As men become increasingly interested in the work of the church and give themselves to Christian service, they discover that they are in a realm where woman has already proven herself proficient. They realize that in most cases it is the women who have held the faith during the dark nights through which the church has often stumbled, and have pointed men to the hills of Galilee where they have again met the risen Christ. They discover that the Dorcas and the Lydias have been rendering to the community a Christian ministry in the name of the Master and as representatives of his church. Because of the demonstrated devotion and ability of these women, practical-minded laymen recognize the large place which women must take in the church.

Never before has the conviction been so strong and so wide-spread that only the church can save civilization. For its great task it needs the best service of both men and women. All Christians everywhere must find a place of service unhindered by custom or prejudice. A field awaits every Christian called of God to definite whole-time Christian service. The demands upon the church are so urgent that no one will dare stand in the way of any Christian who feels the call of God to any Kingdom task. The heart of the modern church is

right on the matter of the place of women in promoting the interests of the kingdom of righteousness. No lingering hesitance in the application of the principle shall hinder the actual work of the church.

My six-year-old daughter said to me some time ago that if she were a man she would be a minister, which statement I accepted of course, as a personal compliment. A little later, one evening as she was preparing for bed, there being no one in the room but us two, she said: "Papa, I like preachers, I like to hear them preach," I made no reply until she came to kiss me good-night. Then I said, "Wilna, you could be a preacher, women sometimes preach." I said it in earnestness, and with the hope that it might encourage her to let her thoughts continue to run in that direction. With unexpected promptness she naively replied: "I'd rather have a husband who preaches."

Doubtless in the most favorable atmosphere of Christian liberty, men will continue to outnumber the women in the pulpits of the land. Women will continue by choice to be man's helpmeet, here as elsewhere. And I wish to pay a tribute to the devoted wives of our pastors whose service, if less conspicuous, is no less important than that of their husbands. To choose to be a minister's wife, and to faithfully

perform the responsibilities of that relationship, is to occupy an exalted position in the Kingdom, as measured by the Master's standard of service.

But there are definite fields also which women may *man*, and to the edification of the church. They should be encouraged to occupy these needy and waiting fields. The interests of the Kingdom require their service. The church that can use the talents of all its members will prosper, and will best meet the needs of this new day.

One day as I was walking down the street in Louisville with Dr. W. J. McGlothlin, teacher of ministers, he said as we passed a charitable institution maintained by the Roman Catholic church, "One of the immediate duties of the Baptist church is to provide opportunities for her young women, who desire to do so, to give themselves to full-time religious service." He realized that throughout his beloved Southland, in which his denomination is so important a religious factor, there awaits the direction of the church an almost wholly unused power, in the many consecrated young women who desire places of definite service under the direction of the church. For a number of years Missionary boards have sent to foreign fields women who as teachers or doctors have car-

ried the light of the Gospel to the dark places of the earth. Their fitness for such service has been fully demonstrated. The church does not seem to be fully aware of the numberless opportunities for similar service here in America. Many communities need nothing more than they need consecrated Christian teachers, nurses, physicians, and social workers; to teach the Word of God, to help the people in their fight against ignorance, disease, and godlessness and to render to the whole community a divine ministry in the name of Him who went about doing good.

Perhaps the late Rev. Anna Howard Shaw is the most illustrious example of the successful woman preacher and pastor. For several years she ministered to her conservative Cape Cod congregation. Untangling the snarls in which a provincial population are likely to get mixed up she led the people into a wholesome life of community fellowship and Christian service. Such experiences might well be multiplied throughout the country.

The harvest fields are waiting for gleaners as well as reapers, else some of the finest grain will be lost in the hedges and along the byways of life. The world needs to be led to the Savior. Confused and blinded humanity is calling for help. The risen Christ stands in the

ways, and speaks in appealing tones to the faithful women, devoted and tender in their ministrations of love. Are there not those who will obey the words of the Master as he calls to them to take the message of hope to his disciples, overshadowed by doubt and fear?

“Go tell my disciples that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.”

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Text—"Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you."
Matt. 28:20a.

The American principle of separation of church and state imposes upon the churches the responsibility of providing religious instruction through some means other than the public school system. This is a duty which has never been half appreciated, and therefore has not been intelligently undertaken by the Christian forces of the country. It is a task to which the church must rally if Christian intelligence and consecrated gumption are to temper the judgments and direct the forces of our modern inflammable and complex society. For this constructive and highly important service there is need of leaders. For the required leadership where shall we look if not to the ministers of the country, and especially to the pastors? There are various plans for the co-operation of the church and the public school to give the school children religious instruction. Where such efforts have been made the initiative has usually been taken by the school. This may have been due in part, at least, to our jealousy lest the church shall encroach upon the rights

of the state. Not always however have the churches responded to the opportunity when offered, or been equipped with teachers or with the organization to make the work effective. Where such an opportunity comes to a pastor it should be accepted as a privilege and the work assumed with all the intelligence and devotion at his command.

My purpose is to indicate some methods by which the church may fulfill its obligation to its own children in the fundamental service of religious education. I shall name four ways in which the church may perform this function. Through the preaching of the Word, the ordinances, the Bible school, and the religious day school. The call is for pastors who can lead in this ministry of the word and in the training of the young.

The first method of religious instruction open to every minister is through the preaching of the Word. I have often recalled with profit a remark which the late Dr. E. M. Tomlinson made to me in Alfred. I was then a student in the Seminary, and had preached the previous Sabbath morning in the village church. The theme of the sermon was "An Exposition of the Book of Ruth." Dr. Tomlinson was expressing his approval of the expository method in preaching, and this is his remark which has been of value to me during these years: "A minister's sermons should be

of such a character that one sitting under his preaching for a number of years would become familiar with the Bible, even though he never read it himself." Dr. Tomlinson believed that a layman should read the Bible. Expository preaching will be all the more interesting and profitable to him who does. But his statement is clear and illuminative, and ministers will do well to apply this test to their preaching. If the pulpit is to perform its teaching function the minister must be a student,—there is no way to get around that, and he must have a well-furnished library,—this too is essential. And the present average length of pastorate must be extended. The minister must be a student of the Word, and a student of all that throws light on the Word, or aids in its interpretation and in its application to human life. He must be long enough in one place to make some adequate use of the results of his study, and to feel the call to a deeper search into the mysteries of divine truth, in order to meet the demands of a growing congregation, and of developing human souls.

I am convinced that when churches retain their pastors longer, with adequate support, which will go beyond physical necessities and afford the means for the purchase of books and for attending Bible conferences and religious conventions, the day of the teaching pastor will be brought in, and the minister's service to the church will be enriched and en-

larged. I predict, also, that when the ministers more nearly measure up to the standard implied in the remark of Dr. Tomlinson, the length of time during which they can minister with profit to a given congregation will be materially increased. "When a minister is in his study, thinking, praying, preparing a message, he is not in seclusion; he is on the mountain surveying the scene so that he may bring the word of their God to the men in the struggle. The most hopeful hour of the desert wandering of Israel was when Moses was on the mount, learning the law of God. In these days there will be little enough thinking. There is little time to think. But the minister must find time to think. Picking up sermons on the street may do at some times; in these times people deserve better than that. They are on the street themselves and know what is there. It is the heavens over-arching the street which they do not think of and which the minister must study. He needs to know the street voices, and his own voice must be the steady one, clearer and firmer than the street voices, with the note of assurance and confidence which all the street voices lack."

The second means of religious education which I wish to mention is available to every church, but is not usually thought of in this connection. I refer to the church ordinances: Baptism and the Lord's Supper. The doctrine of "baptismal regeneration" and of "the

real presence'' in the bread of the Eucharist have been held by us to be so contrary to Scripture that we have rebounded to the other extreme, and have reduced these sacred ordinances to almost empty and meaningless forms. We have received candidates for baptism who have been tossed our way on the crest of a revival wave, have baptized them and received them into the church, without helping them to appreciate the spiritual significance of the ordinance, and without instructing them in the obligations of church membership.

The baptism of our young people should be preceded by instruction. And the service itself should be so conducted as to impress those who join in it by their presence, and especially upon those who are baptized, certain fundamental truths of evangelical Christianity. In the ordinance of baptism three great doctrines of the church are symbolized: the doctrine of the resurrection, of regeneration, and of immortality. Every baptismal service affords a new opportunity to impress upon those who gather something of the depth of meaning and the practical significance of these sacred truths. Evangelical Christians claim no magical power for these ordinances. For that very reason every baptismal service should be approached in a reverent spirit and after thoughtful preparation. Our baptism is a

testimony to our personal faith in the resurrection of Jesus, an expression of our purpose to walk in newness of life, and a witness to our hope in immortality.

The record of a successful pastorate will show that the baptismal waters have been visited several times a year. When practicable this service should be held on the Sabbath eve preceding Holy Communion. My conviction is that the frequent baptismal service gives evidence of an effective method of evangelism, and not only indicates, but helps to secure and maintain a normal spiritual life in the church.

The Communion service, likewise, should be an occasion for impressing and teaching spiritual truth. The fundamental doctrines of the incarnation, the atonement, and the divine imminence should be better understood and more fully appreciated in every Communion service. Above all, every sincere communicant should come to realize the relation of the Divine Spirit to the human life, so as to be able to go out to do the will of the Father; to follow him at whose table he has sat into the garden of weariness and sorrow, and if need be, to Calvary and the Cross.

The ordinances furnish to the church an educational opportunity which ministers might all resolve to use in fuller measure; and they

provide the means for spiritual development which they should study to appropriate more effectively.

The primary and universal means of the church for promoting religious training and for providing a knowledge of the Word, is through the Bible school. The Sabbath school is the church's school of religion, sometimes designated, and appropriately so, as the church studying the Bible. It is a school from which no one ever graduates, and whose text-book is never mastered. The teachings of the Bible are never exhausted because they are not to be learned but lived. A fresh appreciation of this fact has effected a new method of approach in Bible study, is altering Sabbath school organization, and is furnishing a practical basis for the selection and arrangement of lesson material. The revolution that is taking place in Bible school organization is due to the fact that the pupil has become the center around which the organization is built, and the objective point in the selection of lesson material. The Bible contains neither a set of rules to be obeyed nor a system of doctrine to be believed. It sets forth the religious experiences of the race that gave birth to the Christ, contains a four-fold account of that matchless life, and records all that he began both to do and teach. It is a perfect guide to life at every stage of development, the sufficient source of comfort in every time of sorrow, the satisfactory an-

swer to every problem that perplexes the human soul. Its service is not rendered by magic, nor is its comfort the result of a blind faith. Not every page yields the help needed at a given time, and not every passage is appropriate for the instruction of the child. To select from so large a library the proper text for each particular need of the developing child and youth is a large task; one that calls for an intelligent understanding of the Book, and a sympathetic knowledge of the child as well. Many today see a larger field of usefulness for the Bible school than it has yet occupied. There is need of men in the pastorate who can inspire and train leaders for this invaluable service, if the church of the future is to meet its responsibility in the kingdom of Christ.

The last point in this four-fold discussion of the church's program for instruction in religion is the religious day school. I do not mean the vacation Bible school which, backed by a great organization, is doing splendid work in many quarters, especially in the large cities. What I am now advocating is a school held in the church or parish house for from two to four weeks, during vacation time. Perhaps there should be only morning sessions. Its faculty will be composed of men and women, and capable young people who can give an hour a day to hear a class, and who can direct their study. The curriculum will cover a wide range of studies including hymn singing and

memorizing, Bible stories and biography, denominational history, organization and beliefs, missions, and many other subjects adapted to the needs and circumstances of the local situation. The student body of such a school will include the children of the parish, the young people who have time to attend, and perhaps a class of older people who can devote one morning hour of the day to the study of the Bible, or some denominational or missionary subject. Such a school, properly conducted and supported, would bring great profit to those who could attend, and, continued for a number of years, it would become a valuable supplement to the regular educational activities of the church.

There are in the Christian church today two opposite views of the Bible, held in such an extreme fashion as to prove the rule that extremes meet. These two views of Bible authority meet at the point where they nullify its power to build character and promote righteousness. The one view gives the Bible a secondary place as an authority in religion, holding that its benefits must be mediated through a specially ordained priesthood. The other view claims for the Bible supreme authority in religion, but holds to such a mechanical theory of inspiration as to lead to an unintelligent and blighting bibliolatry. The Roman Catholic Bible is sealed by the church, the Protestant Bible often becomes a self-sealer. On the

other hand, the Bible invites and is receiving today as never before sympathetic and intelligent study. It is the charter of all our liberties, and will yet become in fact what it is potentially, the great human emancipator. A better knowledge of the Scriptures is necessary to the freeing of the world from its present thralldom of superstition and error, and to the bringing in of the kingdom of heaven where all men are brothers. Intelligent, educated, trained Christian leaders are needed, who are devoted to a study of the Word, to promote its study in the churches, and to inspire a more loyal service of the Christ whom it reveals.

“Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.”

EFFECTIVE EVANGELISM

Text: "Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations." Matt. 28:19.

We began this series of addresses on the "Challenge of the Ministry" with the Master's "Come," spoken to earnest young men engaged in an honest and profitable business,—to fishermen on the Galilean lake. Today we gather our thoughts around the word "Go," spoken to the same men, and others like them who had staked their lives on the words of Jesus.

It was at most a bare three years from the lakeside invitation to the hillside commission, but they were years of greatest significance to the world. As Jesus walked out by the lake that morning the years of his earth ministry were before him, and his kingdom, however clear-visioned, was but a cherished hope as yet unshared by a single soul on earth. Fresh from the wilderness experience where he had rejected the offer of the world and its glory, he felt the need of companions who should become imbued with his own spirit, and who should share his purposes. The call was for men who could carry forward and out into the world his message of truth and his gospel of salva-

tion. Now, as they had met at the appointed place in the mountain of Galilee, his work on earth was finished. He was about to withdraw his bodily presence, (which was necessary to his initial contact with humanity, but which localized and narrowed his ministry) in order that the Holy Spirit, his ubiquitous "other self," might descend with power. In the wilderness of temptation he had been shown the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, and he felt himself equal to the lordship of all he surveyed. Conscious of his power with men he was tempted to take the royal road to kingdom-rule, and to manipulate the governments of the world for the good of mankind. But he had vision to see not only out over the world, but down through the centuries. He realized that the world was suffering from ills more radical than misrule, and that while a benevolent king might correct many glaring evils what the world most needed was a cure for sin. So he turned his back upon what to the worldly-wise was the obvious way, and chose instead, the way of the cross. And now at the end of the road which had lead him through the Garden of Gethsemane and up Golgotha's hill, Jesus claimed all authority in heaven and on earth. Instead of forsaking heaven to gain the earth, as the tempter would have had him do, he united heaven and earth under one kingship. This he did, to the disappointment of the Jews, not by setting up his capitol in Jerusalem with chosen men, even a

John or a James on his right hand and on his left, but by establishing his throne in the hearts of men.

I have said that the men to whom Jesus gave the great commission to evangelize the world were the same men whom he had called to be his followers three years before on the lakeside. They were the same men, but not the same. Three years of closest contact with the Master had given them a new viewpoint for life. Their admiration for him that morning by the sea had grown into a tender and abiding love by months of blessed companionship with him, and was now by the cross converted into a divine passion. Their hearts burned within them with a new and holy fire, as in the light of the crucifixion the meaning of the scripture was revealed. They saw clearly what the Savior meant when he said his kingdom was not of this world. They now understood his admonition to be in the world but not of it. They realized the meaning of a spiritual kingdom, for they experienced an unbroken communion with the crucified and risen Lord, and felt a joy unspeakable in the assurance of his eternal fellowship.

In this new conception of the nature of the kingdom was made plain the duty of the disciples to extend it in the world, and was made clear the method to be pursued. The kingdom interests were not to be promoted, as the princes

of the church have sometimes seemed to think, by getting possession of earthly thrones, either by force or by adroit diplomacy. Such methods Jesus had rejected at the beginning of his ministry as calculated to defeat the purposes for which he came to earth.

Men must be won to Jesus Christ. Men, singly, one by one, must be led to experience the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit who would take of the things of Christ and make them manifest, to the saving of the lost and to the building up of Christian character. The death of Jesus gave evidence unmistakable of the love of God for the world. With that love as a background the crucifixion revealed also the depth of the world's sin. Sin had done its worst in putting to death the Son of God, but at the point where sin worked out its deepest tragedy, love, redeeming, conquering love did more abound, and the despised cross became the symbol of redemption. Henceforth there could be no doubt that a God of love ruled in the world, who seeks the lost, and who will save all who come to him through Jesus Christ.

It is said that in an earlier day when prairie fires were more frequent and destructive than they are now, these fires often traveled faster than a horse could run. When the settler saw the fire coming, reaching out in consuming flames as it licked up everything

in its path, there was but one way by which he and his family could possibly make their escape. It was folly for them to try to run away by any means of travel at their command. Their only safety was in setting fire to the dry grass around their own home. As the blaze spread out from that center and gained momentum, its flames met the oncoming flames of the raging prairie fire, and out there at the rim of that blackened circle the destructive fire was stayed.

The world was being consumed by the fires of hate and selfishness and deceit. Sin had destroyed its beauty, and had weakened the power of men to build up its life. There was no way of escape. At the cross of Jesus hate was overcome by love, sin was consumed in sacrifice, and the one safety zone for all mankind was provided.

With this gospel of salvation, this story of the cross, the disciples were commissioned to go into all the world. They were not only to be heralds of the truth which Jesus had taught them, but witnesses of his own redeeming, saving power as experienced in their own lives. And this is still the Savior's plan. He has no other.

There is a tradition to the effect that when Jesus returned into heaven, after his ministry to earth had been accomplished, the following

dialogue took place between the Master and an angel of Glory. The angel is supposed to have said: "Master, you died for the world, did you not?" To which the Master replied, "Yes, I gave my life for the world." "But not all are saved, are they?" "No." "Well, what is your plan to save them?" "I left a few disciples down there who know the plan of redemption, and I am expecting them to tell the others." "But suppose they do not tell others. Suppose that even James and John and Peter and Andrew and the others are faithful, as you feel sure they will be, but suppose away down in the twentieth century someone refuses to tell others, what is your plan then?" And the Savior replied, "I have no other plan. I am depending on them."

From every quarter of christendom there comes with discouraging frequency and with unrelieved regularity the cry of a dearth of ministers; and the young men are not giving themselves to this holy calling in anything like adequate numbers. Does this mean that in our generation men are refusing to bear the message of life and salvation to the world,—to the world distraught and dying in the throes of a selfish materialism? Has some other plan been heralded from heaven or worked out by men whereby we must be saved? Is there no need for messengers of the cross to go into all the world to disciple, and baptize, and teach the nations of the earth? Surely

the world's need was never more evident than now. The systems of men for the salvation of the race have been tried and found wanting. There is no other Name by which men must be saved. The world is vocal with the Macedonian call; where are the God-inspired apostles who will respond to its urgent cry?

It can no longer be said that young men lack the heroic spirit; or that they seek softness, and shun a task because it is difficult. Let them but understand that it is worth while and they run to meet hardness, and "go over the top" with a daring and bravery which knows no fear and stops at no danger. It must be that the call of Jesus is not understood. I fear the church by its own timidity has given to this great commission of the Master a false and weakened content that has robbed it of its heroic appeal and made it mean too little in the minds of young men of power and ambition.

The cross of Jesus, on the one hand, has been associated with darkened rooms and burning tapers. Confined to an atmosphere wholly retrospective and smelling of the middle ages, it has begotten an attitude of life receptive and passive. On the other hand, it has been made meaningless by the ease with which one may by hitting the sawdust trail claim and reclaim its magic power to work a cheap salvation. The cross has no power to impart to those who are faithful in mere adoration, expressed in grace-

ful or even pious genuflections. Many an evangelist's appeal means little more to those who come forward and take his hand than if he had said, "Come to x,"—an unknown quantity.

The sacrifice of Jesus on a green hill, outside a city wall, was not the "original" Passion Play, written in heaven and staged on the earth. Jesus gave his life not because God required it, for it was sin that put him to death. But in that execution the Master proved to be deathless because divine, and sin itself was doomed. The meaning of that sacrifice needs to be interpreted in terms that may be understood by men who live in these strenuous and changing times. The world has in these latter days developed a broad idea of service. All kinds of good works are included under the enticing name. This is all very good. It is quite possible, however, that some one or all of these forms of service may be looked at as in itself and for its sake the ultimate goal and aim of effort. Where this becomes true then merely ameliorative effort usurps the place of redemptive service.

Jesus entered upon a manifold ministry. He healed the sick, he cheered the discouraged, he comforted the sorrowing, he taught the ignorant. All ministries along these lines in His name must be reckoned as affiliated with his work, as having the sanction of his example and the promise of his approval. Such ser-

vice is made the real test of discipleship in the Master's graphic description of the final judgment. Nevertheless it must not be forgotten that the primary object of Jesus in his ministering was the salvation of souls from the thralldom of sin. These deeds of mercy are but the fruits of a saved life. Their full and legitimate harvest is not reaped except souls are saved from sin. Of course the awakened forces in the redeemed life should be harnessed up to the great task of the kingdom of God. The regenerate man needs to be furnished with a task of a regenerate sort. But the elemental entity, the primary unit, in the kingdom of righteousness is the redeemed and regenerate man.

The minister will always find reforms to champion. There will always be abnormal and maladjusted social conditions which will call for immediate action in an ameliorating ministry. To these the minister dare not close his eyes or refuse his help. Indeed he cannot and be true to the Master who went about doing good. But his first and highest service is to bring to bear upon sinful men the sacrificial and saving life of Jesus Christ.

Regenerate men will make a regenerate world; and a regenerate world will be a world of peace and righteousness, and of brotherhood.

The call is for men regenerate in life, and whose lives are hid with Christ in God, to proclaim to men this message of redeeming love, this gospel of eternal life.

“Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations.”

WAITING FIELDS

Text—"Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields, that they are white unto harvest." John 4:35.

The elements in a call to the ministry, viewed from the earth side, are many, and often complex. Doubtless this is due to the dullness of our ears and to the dimness of our vision. The way of life is narrow and straight, and the call of God is clear and simple. We make the way difficult by our willfulness, and the voice of God uncertain because we continually hearken to the voices of earth.

Although the purposes of God are constant and his will for us is unchanging, temperament, environment, and education will determine somewhat the manner in which his will is made known. Men equally positive of a call of God to the Christian ministry find on comparing experiences that they differ very greatly, although the experience is equally satisfactory to both, and for each the divine sanction upon his ministry is unmistakable.

For many servants of God the first conviction of a call to definite, whole-time life service is an experience of inner necessity. "Woe is me if I preach not the Gospel." It

is an impulse of consecration by which one would gladly be consumed on the sacrificial altar of service. No doubt this experience in some degree is a part of every genuine call. Again, the voice of the people sometimes comes as the first evidence of a call to Christian service. "Vox populi, vox Dei." When I was a young man feeling my way toward the path of duty and of Christian privilege, I had a feeling that I did not want any one to speak to me concerning the ministry. I was afraid they might confuse for me the clear call of God, for which I was listening. I do know, however, that, after all, the words of others encouraged me. As I analyze from this distance my feelings and their promptings, I am now convinced that what I really feared was insincere or ill-matured words of encouragement or approval. I had frequently heard people say of certain other young men: "He ought to be a preacher; he is such a good talker." To my mind such a remark showed a lack of appreciation of the real qualities in a young man that point toward the ministry. I did not consider the "gift of gab" as the primary prerequisite. I was impressed rather with what Charles M. Sheldon made one of his characters say in a book that fell in my hands, and which I read with extreme satisfaction: "I must preach the Gospel, even if I have to speak from the tail end of a wagon, else why did God make me to love people so." Real, genuine, disinterested

love for folks is such a subtle element in a young man's make-up that it is likely to be over-looked, while less important characteristics are emphasized. But when out of a sober conversation one in whom a young man has confidence suggests that perhaps he should give himself to the ministry, that young man is likely to listen as to the voice of God.

While the elements named are most likely to be present, there is always in every genuine call to the ministry the consciousness of a waiting field. The vision of a man's job in a field that some one should occupy is often the Holy Spirit's first means of approach in leading a young man to see his duty in relation to the Christian ministry. Whatever other means are used to awaken a sense of responsibility in this regard, and in whatever manner the Spirit first speaks, or succeeds in being heard, it is the sense of a waiting field that confirms the call. Whatever power may impel one to move forward, the open door shows the way and encourages the next step.

The Holy Spirit is searching today for sensitive souls who are able to see the ripening fields which wait to be garnered for the Kingdom of Heaven.

For the disciples of Jesus Samaria had been a territory to be shunned. Even now for them it was merely a passage way from

Judea to Galilee; an uninteresting strip of country to be passed through as quickly as possible. Its inhabitants were of another race; worse yet, they were a mixed race! The disciples and Jesus were Jews. And "Jews have no dealings with Samaritans." But to the Master these Samaritans were folks. They were not members of the Jewish race, but they were members of the human race, to which, and for which, he was giving his life. The woman by the well furnished him his opportunity, therefore, and the response of the villagers to her testimony concerning the Christ suggested a harvest field of sinful but seeking human souls ready for the reaper.

From the viewpoint of the Master as revealed in this declaration at Sychar there are waiting fields all about us, white for the harvest, but which we fail to see because of our provincialism and our prejudice. The true disciple of Jesus is able to see beneath differences in race or language or color, and to discover the heart-hunger of our common humanity. To think only in classes is both coarse and cheap. This is true no matter how large or how important the class. Americanism is something we all believe in, and which we desire to promote; but even that splendid term is so narrowed in definition by many, even by certain United States senators, that it fails to arouse enthusiasm on the part of the followers of the Lord of all life. Every effort to

Americanize the foreigner is in the interest of a more stable national life, and should be supported by all good Christians. But to Christianize Americans, both native and foreign-born, is the obligation of the churches of America. For this service the fields are white, both from the standpoint of need and of opportunity.

The world is the field; and the field is white. We are living in a changed world; in a restless, uneasy, mobile world. These are elements that do not make for stability of life and character. Rather do they hinder the progress of the Kingdom of God, which is a kingdom of peace and righteousness, and of hope. Therefore this spirit of unrest is enmity against Christianity. However, these indications of unrest have a meaning not revealed in the surface readings of society and the present social status. This dominant uncertainty and aimless striving is but an indication of the soul-hunger which prevails everywhere. The molten, mobile state of society is a call to the churches to supply the Christian mold while the conditions are right to shape society for Christ. The fact that every would-be prophet has his coterie of followers, and every ism its adherents, is evidence of dissatisfaction with things as they are; the indication of a "divine discontent." The further fact that these cults and creeds fail to give satisfaction is proof that only the Christ can satisfy. Here then is the supreme opportunity of the Christian church

to bring to bear upon a sin-sick and troubled world the only religion that will save and the only life that will satisfy,—the Christianity of Jesus.

There is one thing more to be said in considering the world as the harvest field, and the present state of society as the church's opportunity. While doubts have arisen in the minds of a great many people as to the efficacy of the prevailing philosophy of the time, there is a growing confidence in the Church as the exponent of a vital and saving faith. Men everywhere are able to see what havoc can be wrought by a most highly civilized people, when they do not possess the Christ spirit. There is more than a lurking suspicion that materialism however refined, and education however scientific, are unable to lead humanity out of the woods. Out of the shadow and mist of conflicting ideals and opposing institutions has emerged in clearer outline the Church of Jesus Christ. Increasingly and everywhere men will embrace the glorious hope which it is her privilege to hold out to them, if she can be given the leadership which the opportunity demands, and for which God is calling.

While the world is the field and as such makes its appeal to those who desire to make the most of their lives, yet to view it in this comprehensive way is likely to discourage

rather than to stimulate a response to the call for leaders. What young men need perhaps more than anything else, if they are to be led to give themselves to the Christian ministry, is to visualize a specific field in which one man can find his opportunity to inspire and organize and develop the religious forces in such a way as to spiritualize the entire community life. And after all has been said, there is just one way to Christianize the world. Some one must bring to bear upon each specific community the spirit and methods of the Master. There must be provided the proper leadership of all the local forces, until every member of the community catches the vision and gives his co-operation to the holy emprise.

For several years I have studied somewhat carefully country life conditions as presented in the growing body of literature on that subject. Especially have I considered the relation of the church to the problems of the country community. More recently as chairman of the Interchurch Rural Survey Council of my own state I have come into first-hand knowledge of conditions and needs as they actually exist. The situation in West Virginia in this regard is similar no doubt, to conditions elsewhere. The survey of Ohio by the Country Life Commission of the Federal Council justifies this judgment in the matter. A review of the fields occupied by our own Seventh Day

Baptist churches confirms again this fact so clearly evident everywhere, that what the church needs is leaders. Every Seventh Day Baptist church in West Virginia but one, is set in a community where there is no other minister resident and giving his whole time to the service of the community. What is true in West Virginia is true in many other localities where there are Seventh Day Baptist churches. What an opportunity this presents to Seventh Day Baptists if capable men, consecrated and trained for the work, can be placed in these communities, as pastors of Seventh Day Baptist churches, but as leaders in all community interests and enterprises. There is needed in every community a resident minister, the pastor of one church, who can give himself to the work of building up the life of the whole community, and of infusing the economic and social relationships with the community spirit and the Gospel of Christian brotherhood. It will not do to discourage our young men by saying, as has been said, that the denomination already has "preachers to burn." These men who are not now employed in the waiting harvest fields have for the most part been trained for a different kind of service than that which is required by present conditions. There is need of a larger force of reapers, men who really do burn with a holy fire, and a passion for service; men who are trained to meet the opportunities in these waiting fields. No longer

can any denomination justify its course in ministering to a few families in a given community, while feeling no responsibility for the numbers of unchurched living all about, and who are as sheep without a shepherd.

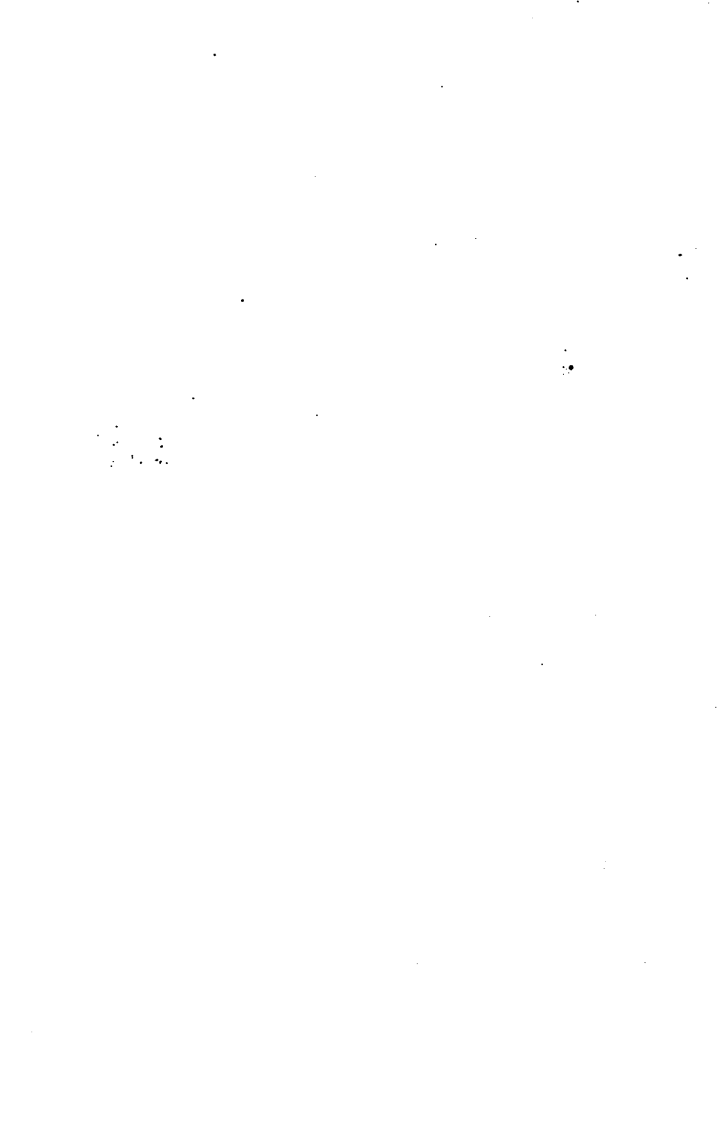
The Seventh Day Baptist minister has a two-fold service to render, which calls for the noblest of our young men; and for young men with the best possible training and equipment.

In the first place we need young men who give forth no uncertain sound when it comes to preaching Sabbath truth. The call is for young men who are acquainted with, and who appreciate, the Sabbath of Scripture and of history; men who are imbued with the real Sabbath spirit, who love the Holy Day, and who honor God and serve men in the use they make of its sacred hours. Whittier's advice to the young man who wished to be of real service was that he champion some unpopular but worthy reform. This is the Sabbath-keeper's happy position and privilege. It requires courage to stand for an unpopular truth, but it adds zest to life.

Along with this spirit and service of the reformer, which indicates and insures a healthy and militant Christianity, should go the desire and purpose to render a spiritual ministry to all who need help.

For such championship of truth, and for such a ministry, the world is waiting. The fields are white. The call is loud. The need is urgent.

“Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields, that they are white unto harvest.”



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